

# Monomoy and Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuges Comprehensive Conservation Plan

## *Planning Update*

*Winter 2005/2006*

### 2005 Field Season Updates

The field seasons for Monomoy and Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) were certainly busy this year!

#### Monomoy NWR

Staff, volunteers, and interns at Monomoy NWR dealt with a number of challenges during this busy nesting season. Strong winter storms and late spring Nor'easters impacted nesting habitat and even caused a need for some species to re-nest after their original nests were overwashed.



**Black skimmer pair** USFWS photo

In addition, the winter/spring storms further restricted the "southway" and changed the dynamics of landing boats on South Monomoy. A number of private boats were stranded at mid-tide and below in the channel of the southway. Refuge staff had to change the location of the landing sites based upon tide levels.

The birds had a mixed year on Monomoy.

- A total of 19 pairs of federal-listed threatened piping plovers nested on the refuge. Thirteen chicks fledged and overall reproductive success was fairly poor - 0.68 chicks/pair.

- A total of 8,834 common terns nested on the north tip of South Monomoy Island this season. The reproductive success in 2005 was fairly good with 1.44 chicks fledged per nest. Monomoy NWR hosts half of the tern population in Massachusetts and is the largest common tern colony on the Atlantic coast.

- A total of 27 pairs of federal-listed endangered roseate terns nested on the refuge.
- Laughing gull numbers decreased slightly to 1,312 pairs in 2005.

- A total of 132 pairs of Least Terns nested on the refuge.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron decreased from 200 pairs in 2004 to 174 pairs in 2005. In addition, 10 pairs of Snowy Egret nested on the refuge in 2005, along with 2 pairs of Great Egret.
- Five pairs of Black Skimmers nested on Minimoy in 2005.

Monomoy was again the only nesting site in Massachusetts for this species.

- A total of 29 pairs of American Oystercatcher nested on the refuge.

#### Nomans Land Island NWR

Managing habitat and wildlife species on Nomans Land Island NWR is very challenging. There are a number of logistical difficulties associated with working on the island, which is 3 miles south of Martha's Vineyard. Each year, however, the biologists for the Eastern Massachusetts NWR Complex make the journey across Nantucket Sound on a number of occasions to make strides toward ensuring some of the needs are met.

During the 2005 field season, biologists conducted the following activities on Nomans Land Island:

Double Crested-cormorant survey yielded about 500 nests, down from last year. Cormorants mostly nested on the North peninsula again, but a few also nested in a new location on the south side of the island. Lower numbers may be due to the nor'easter in late May.



**Nomans Land Island** USFWS photo

Two pairs of Common Terns were found with 3 chicks this year –

this is the first time since about 1987 that terns have been found nesting on the Island.

Four pairs of American Oystercatchers were present, with at least 3 pairs nesting and 2 pairs likely fledging chicks.

2 marshbird surveys were conducted with a total of 19 Virginia Rails during the June survey and 6 Virginia rails during the July survey.

Other highlights include: Pacific Loon in full breeding plumage, Arctic Tern in first winter plumage, King Eider female, a swamp sparrow, and a pair of Bald Eagles on the island.

Continued with invasive species mapping, control, and monitoring - aerial spraying for 10 acres of phragmites, hand pulling of purple loosestrife, monitoring of past control areas for Japanese honeysuckle, Autumn olive, and Silver poplar

### Ongoing research at Monomoy NWR

One of the major issues raised during the scoping process for the CCP was the continuation of commercial shellfishing at Monomoy. As we work through the CCP process, we are aware of some areas that require more detailed and site-specific information to make sound decisions. The Service has developed a plan for conducting research that examines shorebird use of Monomoy NWR.

Stephanie Koch, biologist for the Complex, is leading the research effort for the Service. She has been working closely with Service biologists, along with biologists from the greater biological community. During the late summer and early fall, the Service conducted shorebird surveys.

In addition, during the fall, the Service estimated percent habitat cover types for North Monomoy island, including mudflat, marsh, and musselbeds.

Since the end of the field season, Service personnel have been performing data entry and reviewing data as it is entered. The Service will begin data analysis this spring. Additional field research will be conducted this upcoming summer and fall.

In addition, the Service spent some time during the late summer mapping

locations for all of public uses of North Monomoy. Each of these sets of data will be valuable as we continue to examine the relationship between shellfishermen, other Monomoy visitors, and Monomoy's important shorebird populations.

We have also been exchanging information with the town of Chatham and researchers that they have hired to help ensure that our research efforts complement one another. Researchers for the town have been examining the availability of food resources for

shorebirds and interactions between shellfishermen and shorebirds.

### On-going Planning Efforts

The Monomoy and Nomans Land Island "Planning Team", which consists of representatives from the refuge, other Service programs (such as migratory birds and ecological services), and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, will be convening this winter and spring to discuss "Goals and Objectives" for the refuge (see Summer 2005 "planning update" for more information about Goals and Objectives).

As we formulate specific Goals and Objectives, we plan to provide public information about them. We will keep our website

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/monomoy/plan.html> up-to-date.

### Contact Information

Direct all CCP correspondence to:  
Bill Perry, Refuge Planner  
Eastern Massachusetts National  
Wildlife Refuge Complex  
73 Weir Hill Rd.  
Sudbury, MA 01776  
Phone: 978-443-4661 ext. 32



Sunset at Monomoy NWR:  
USFWS photo



Shoreline of Nomans Land Island: USFWS Photo